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MICHELE DRAYTON OF ILWU LOCAL NUMBER 52, PCPA

INTERVIEWEE: MICHELE DRAYTON

INTERVIEWERS: HARVEY SCHWARTZ, CONOR CASEY

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[00:00:00] **HARVEY SCHWARTZ:** This is Harvey Schwartz. I'm in Portland, Oregon. This is the eighteenth of September, 2018. Conor Casey is on the camera, and we are with Michele Drayton today. Michele, to start out: can you tell me [your] date of birth, where you were born, when you were born?

[00:00:29] **MICHELE DRAYTON:** Okay, I was born February 11, 1945 in Los Angeles, California, and my family moved to Seattle [Washington] in 1951—when I was six—and that's where I grew up.

[00:00:48] **HARVEY:** Can you tell us a little bit about your family background? What your parents were up to, what they did, what their interests were, their jobs, and their politics?

[00:00:54] **MICHELE:** Okay, well, my parents were both very left-wing, and as a matter of fact, when I was young my parents were in the Communist Party, up until I was about twelve. When we moved up to Seattle, it was because my dad was supposed to be doing some kind of work for the Party, I don't really know exactly what. But I know when we were kids, every summer we went out to this summer camp that was outside of Seattle and camped, and it was mostly the kids of other Party members. And I know people always say that, you know, we were being indoctrinated, but the only thing I ever remember is we got to go swimming every day and I learned how to do the salsa. So, that's what I remember about summer camp.

[00:01:48] **HARVEY:** Do you remember the name of the summer camp?

[00:01:50] **MICHELE:** You know, I don't know if it really had an actual name. It was on a farm that belonged to another family that was in the [Communist] Party.

[00:02:02] **HARVEY:** When you were six years old, there's a photograph of you—what was that all about?

[00:02:07] **MICHELE:** Okay, well, I'm not sure if that was in Seattle or L.A., but I think it must've been in Seattle. That was when [Julius and Ethel] Rosenberg had been found guilty of treason and they were going to be executed, and there were all these demonstrations. So, I obviously went to a demonstration with my mother, and I was holding a sign that said "we don't want to be orphans." That was supposed to be—they had two sons—the kids. Another early memory I have—and this is when we still lived in L.A.—we were in a peace parade. In L.A. because it's hot and it's big, you didn't walk. It was a line of cars. But the main thing I remember—because we had a really old car—is our car broke down. So we had to get out of the parade and pull around somewhere and try to get the car going again.

[00:03:13] **HARVEY:** That's what you recall from that?

[00:03:18] **MICHELE:** [affirmative]

[00:03:18] **HARVEY:** What kind of work did your folks have?

[00:03:21] **MICHELE:** Well, when we lived in L.A. I know my dad was in some kind of a furniture factory union, I'm not sure what the name of it was. After we moved up to Seattle, my dad started working as a warehouseman, then he got into the 1957 Longshore pool. And my mom was basically a nursery school teacher, then at one point she went to work for a private school called [The Seguin School for the Special Child] and it was for children who had various kinds of physical and mental disabilities. She also ran a nursery school at the [Yesler Terrace Housing Project]. She and my dad got into a lot of political activities there, some of them having to do with things like—because this was in the central area of Seattle and Yesler Terrace was, I think, just about the first racially integrated low-income housing, so it was kind of a big deal—and there was a grocery store not far from there that wouldn't hire African Americans to work there, and I remember there was some protests and things around that to get them to change their practices.

[00:05:06] **HARVEY:** What was it like growing up in Seattle at that point, at that time when you were a youngster?

[00:05:10] **MICHELE:** It was a good place to grow up. It wasn't as crowded as it is now when we were kids. We lived not far from the lake. We could go out and just roam around the woods on our own for hours. We didn't have a lot of money—for one thing, longshoremen didn't make such good wages then. But my mom always made sure I had ballet lessons and my sister had art lessons, and I always got a kick out of families that are really into sports because what I'll tell people is my family did folk dancing and we went to demonstrations—those were our family activities. [laughing]

[00:06:07] **HARVEY:** You're basically born into the Cold War, essentially. What's it like being a "red diaper baby," particularly as you go towards high-school age?

[00:06:18] **MICHELE:** Well, it was kind of like you had these two separate lives. You had this one group of friends whose parents were mostly in the [Communist] Party, and then you had a group of school friends, and the two usually did not cross. So, we would have school activities, and when I was in high school my mother was the president of the [Parent Teacher Association], so she was always really involved with the school stuff, and my sister and I did a lot of school activities. But the other stuff was completely separate. So it was kind of a little like having two different brains. [laughing]

[00:07:02] **HARVEY:** Did you ever get into some sort of a problem or get outed in some sense?

[00:07:07] **MICHELE:** No, but one of my best friends from—well, I guess we were best friends ever since junior high—he was a year ahead of me in school. His mom was called before the House Un-American

Activities Committee, and her picture was on the front page of the paper. And I remember him telling me, [he] only had one friend, and that was this Native American kid who was also “on the outs.” And there was a lot of interesting things about the Party in Seattle. There was a real split when this House Un-American Activities thing came, and there were a lot of people who became persona non grata within the Party. They might have been people who were in the Party for years and years and years and then for some reason they fell out of favor, who knows why. But I remember there was a woman who’d been on a train trip, and while she was gone, somehow the Party had decided that she was on the outs. And I remember when she came back to the train station my mom and dad were the only people who went to meet her, and when she was called before that committee she named all kinds of people, but she did not name my mom and dad. And that’s when I kind of figured out that people and personal relationships are more important than ideology. So when all this stuff about Stalin came out, my mom and dad quit the Party, and a lot of their friends joined the [Socialist Workers Party] . My mom and dad never ever joined another Party although they were always active in a lot of Civil Rights stuff or, you know, when there was a lot of stuff going on in Central America. They were still doing a lot of things. But one of the interesting things is that, I think when my dad was in his eighties, he requested his F.B.I. file, which is about that thick [gestures several inches with hand] and they had gone back and they had started following him and keeping track of him when he was in high school. And almost every single meeting he was ever at, there was somebody in there who was reporting to the F.B.I. But in the report the names are redacted, so you never knew who it was. But, you know, that has made me somewhat suspicious of joining parties. And I know there's a lot of fairly radical parties in Seattle, and I think because of the bad experiences I had with this kind of stuff as a kid, I never really wanted anything to do with them. So, as far as politics and social justice goes, pretty much all of my stuff has been around the union. And before I was in the union I was a school teacher, so I was always part of the teachers’ union.

[00:10:34] **HARVEY:** Where did you go to school?

[00:10:37] **MICHELE:** I went to the University of Washington. I got married really young. I had two kids. I got divorced after about ten years. And that was just about the time—it took me ten years to get my college degree because of having kids and stuff, and I just happened to graduate with a teaching degree when nobody around Seattle was hiring teachers. That’s when everybody had moved out of the city and the schools were all closing down. So, I worked as a substitute for a year. The University of Washington had a placement center, and anybody who was interested in hiring teachers would come to this placement center. I had a degree in education, but my other degree was in anthropology, and I was always really interested in other cultures, other places, other countries. These people from the island of Guam came to the placement center. Guam didn’t have enough local people who had teaching degrees, and it’s a U.S. territory, so you have to have a real teaching degree to teach there. So, I interviewed with these people, and they whipped out this contract and filled in my name and said, “Okay, you read this over, and if you decide you want to come you just fill this out and send it in.” They would pay your way over, they would pay for your kids to come, they would pay to ship your household goods—not furniture, but your clothes and that kind of stuff—and they would give you subsidized housing for two years. So, I went to the library, and there were two books on Guam, and they were both written before World War II. I signed that contract and sent it in. Me and my two daughters moved to Guam, and we lived there for five years, and it was really, really interesting and eye-opening.

[00:12:43] **HARVEY:** In what sense?

[00:12:45] **MICHELE:** Well, for one thing, it was just a whole different culture. It’s a U.S. territory, but the people there speak Chamorro, which is a language just mainly in Guam and a few little other islands. And there’s this overlay of American culture, but underneath, it still works differently. Okay, for instance, if you want a telephone, you go down to the telephone company—you drive down to the telephone company—and you apply for a telephone. But you’re never getting a telephone. If you really want a telephone—because in the

schools, most of the teachers at that time, not all of them, but most of them were from the [United] States because they had the degrees. Everybody who works in the schools, and most of the principals, were Guamanian. And so you would go to your assistant Guamanian teacher and go, “Do you know anybody who works for the phone company?” and they would go, “Oh yeah, my second-cousin’s daughter’s husband works for the phone company,” and then you would say, “Do you think you could get me a telephone?” And then maybe in a month or so you would get a telephone, and then you would buy a present for this person. So like I said, there was this overlay of American culture, but that’s not the way anything really worked. And also, because I had grown up in such a left-wing family, I was super, super critical of the U.S. because, let’s face it, there’s lots of room for improvement. But I also learned, after traveling to the Philippines and some different places, that we actually do have it pretty good compared to most of these other places. Actually, there were a lot of teachers on Guam who were from the Philippines because they have accredited colleges in the Philippines. I know at one point we went over to the Philippines, I think at Christmas time or something, and we visited some relatives of people we knew on Guam. You would go out to their house, and these were considered middle-class people, they were teachers or something, but to us their house looked like it was sort of a construction site because they could only build something when they got the money. So maybe they were building an addition, but they’ve only got two walls because they’re waiting until they get the money to get the rest of it. Usually, they would have the silverware locked up, but if they had Americans as guests they would get the silverware out. When I lived on Guam, most Filipinos ate with their hands. The whole idea of—I mean, it was just kind of—that’s what they did. And I remember when I moved back to Seattle and we stayed with my mom and dad for awhile, and my mom asked my daughter to set the table. So she plunks down a napkin and a fork at each plate. And my mom goes—my mom used to be a banquet waiter, so she knows this stuff—“Well, where’s the spoon, where’s the knife?” And my daughter says, “What do we need those for?” So, moving back here—

[00:16:33] **HARVEY:** Why’d you come back?

[00:16:34] **MICHELE:** Well, I came back because, actually, I had been there for five years, and I was gonna get married, and the guy I was gonna marry died. So at that point, I thought, “Well, I guess I’ll go home.” So we lived with my mom and dad for awhile, and for my youngest daughter—because she was in Kindergarten when we moved [to Guam]—coming back was a huge cultural thing. She didn’t have any friends. She didn’t know how to use the telephone—getting a telephone was a big deal when we got back here. For all of us, we didn’t know any of the music for the last five years. I had never had a credit card when I lived on Guam. So moving back here—I got a job up in Snohomish [Washington]—actually, a really good job—I taught remedial reading at the junior high, and that was in about 1979, there was still lots of extra federal money for reading. I was team-teaching with another teacher, we both had master’s degrees, and we had a class size limit of sixteen. Now that’s in junior high. So, that was a great job. And the pay was better than in Seattle, but I was still a single parent. At one point, when I had been home during the summer, I had gotten on one of the casual lists for the checkers for Local 52, so when I came back and I got this job, I just made barely enough money to—you know, if my car broke down or something, that was just a major disaster. So I started going out to the union hall to get extra jobs, and I would go in the summertime, and I would go during Christmas vacation and spring vacation. And as a matter of fact, I learned one of the best times to get a job during Christmas vacation was if it snowed because a lot of regular people just call and go, “I’m not coming in today.” So if you can make it down to the union hall, you’re probably going to get a job. After I had been home for, I guess about a year and a half, that’s when they opened up the B-list for Local 52. One of the reasons it was opened up is because this whole group of casual checkers, and if you’ve interviewed Ian [Kennedy], he’s probably told you about the casual checkers association that we organized ourselves.

[00:19:22] **HARVEY:** Tell us about it.

[00:19:23] **MICHELE:** Well, they weren't gonna take any new B-list, so we organized ourselves into this little unofficial club. We started sending people down to the caucuses to promote our case—and in the end, we hired a lawyer to file a grievance for us, and Sam Kagel ruled that they had to—and one of the main reasons was because they didn't have any women.

[00:19:54] **HARVEY:** Was that the grievance? Was that part of the grievance?

[00:19:57] **MICHELE:** That was part of the grievance because they didn't have any women in the checkers. And there were women on this casual list. So, they ruled that they had to open up the list, and I think they had to take twenty-five. There was a math test—because you were going to be a checker; you had to do math—there was a math test, and then there was an interview, and the interview was between the union and the employers. You got extra points for certain things: you got extra points for every year of college—well I had five years of college—and you got extra points for having a driver's license, and you got extra points for being a registered voter. So I was one of the women selected to be on the B-list because my math test wasn't perfect, but it was pretty good, and I'm sure it didn't hurt that my dad was on the [Labor Relations Committee] . I have kind of mixed emotions about this whole nepotism thing because that kept unionism sort of in the family; on the other hand, there were no women, and there weren't very many—depending on where you were—there weren't very many people of color. There was a lot, I think, in San Francisco, quite a few in Seattle, but in Tacoma, I don't think had anybody.

[00:21:32] **HARVEY:** Michele, what year is this?

[00:21:34] **MICHELE:** I got registered in 1981. And I retired in 2007.

[00:21:46] **HARVEY:** Can we go back? Where'd you get your master's degree?

[00:21:49] **MICHELE:** I got my master's degree at the University of Guam.

[00:21:52] **HARVEY:** Oh, you got it when you were over there?

[00:21:53] **MICHELE:** Yes. [smiling] And it was a great place to go to school because, first of all, it was only five dollars a credit, and usually we never had to buy any textbooks because they never got there in time. There was a guy who was from one of the California colleges, and he was the head of the master's reading program on Guam. And I remember him saying at one point he was gonna be leaving, "Okay, I know this is a lot of work for you guys to do, but I know you can do it, and I want to make sure you all graduate before I leave." And we did. And actually, when I interviewed for the job in Snohomish, part of the thing was I had taught at a remedial reading program for junior high on Guam, and that's what they needed, but also the guy said it was just really interesting that I had a degree from the University of Guam, and it kind of made me stand out somehow.

[00:23:04] **HARVEY:** What classes were you teaching in Guam? Was it also junior high?

[00:23:08] **MICHELE:** I started out at an elementary school, and like I said, this is when there was lots of extra federal money. I was at an elementary school that was [Kindergarten] through [third grade] . My class size limit was eight. I had two full-time aids: one of them who helped me in the classroom, the other one who went out and made home visitations and took projects for the parents to do with the kids. Like I said, this was a great job. That was probably the best teaching job I ever had. Then when I moved up to junior high, which basically I did because one of my friends who was starting the junior high program was just like, "Please come, I need to make sure I have good teachers." So we had sixteen kids in those classes, and we had lots of extra different kinds of materials that we could use, and it was kind of interesting because I had a lot of Guamanians. I had these Korean kids—I remember I had these two Korean boys, and one of the things that you had to do was everyday

you had to write in your journal, like just a half a page. These two boys were not doing it. And I said, “I’m gonna send a bad work-slip home.” Well, in those Korean families, you’d better not get a bad work-slip. So they were like, “No, no, no, no, we just don’t know what to write about!” and I said, “What sports do you play?” “Well, we play soccer.” And I said, “Everyday, you can write something about soccer.” And the thing about writing is—which you guys probably know—the more you do it, the easier it is. So they would start out, you know, pulling their hair out, but a few months later, they’d be telling you all about the practice and the game. And actually one of my girlfriends taught—because they also had classes for adults, which I taught sometimes too. She had these—basically, trying to bring some of the adults up to a higher reading level or something—and she would have them—they were supposed to write. These were not kids; these were adults. And they would just go, “Well, we don’t know what to write.” And she would say, “you can write the same word over and over again, you just need to keep that pen moving.” And then eventually, they would have some things to say. It was a really interesting place to live.

[00:26:09] **HARVEY:** Now, maybe it’s obvious, or it might seem obvious, but how come you decided to leave teaching, which you obviously liked?

[00:26:17] **MICHELE:** Well, I believe it all had to do with money. Plus, let’s face it: my dad had been on the waterfront for a long time. We were all about the union. And I really needed the money.

[00:26:33] **HARVEY:** Sure. Did he edit the Rusty Hook, your dad?

[00:26:37] **MICHELE:** He was one of the people who wrote for the Rusty Hook, yeah.

[00:26:40] **HARVEY:** What else did he do for the union? Did he have other—

[00:26:42] **MICHELE:** He was on the [Executive] Board for, I don’t know, about a million years. He was on the Labor Relations Committee, I’m not really sure for how many years.

[00:26:53] **HARVEY:** Did you mention his name for us, today?

[00:26:57] **MICHELE:** I don’t think I did. My dad’s name was Art Mink, and he died about five years ago. He was active in the Harry Bridges Chair and in the Labor Archives and, as a matter of fact, the week before he died—he was ninety-one and a half—he was at the planning committee for the Seattle Pensioner’s Convention, and he was taking the notes.

[00:27:23] **HARVEY:** So he was active in [Pacific Coast Pensioner Association] ?

[00:27:26] **MICHELE:** Oh yeah. And, as a matter of fact, when I first retired my mom had to go to a nursing home, and it was costing my dad a fortune. And Ian and I had decided—we had lived in one of those old 1904 houses with a lot of stairs—and we had just decided that was not working. We looked around West Seattle and found a house we could remodel. We made room for my dad, so my dad sold his house. We all moved in together in West Seattle, and my dad had his own bedroom and bathroom and stuff downstairs. When I first retired, Ian and my dad would go to the pensioners meeting, and I’m like, “I think that’s enough of the family.” [laughing] But after my dad died, that’s when I really started going more regularly—up till then I was like, “You guys just go, that’s fine.”

[00:28:32] **HARVEY:** Can we roll back a little bit to when you first got registered?

[00:28:37] **MICHELE:** Okay, that was 1981.

[00:28:39] **HARVEY:** 1981, right. What happens then? Can you describe your first job and your first day on the job?

[00:28:48] **MICHELE:** Well, first of all, let me say that the Local 19 took a pool in 1980, which had some women in it. Our pool was in 1981. Out of twenty-five, there were six women. My first day on the job, my dad had spent a lot of time the night before teaching me how to read bill of ladings because he thought I was probably gonna get a job at a CFS: this is how you read the bill of lading, this is how you mark stuff up, blah, blah, blah.

[00:29:27] **HARVEY:** What's CFS?

[00:29:29] **MICHELE:** Container Freight Station. It's a warehouse. Of course, my first day on the job, I didn't get a job at a CFS, I got a job at a gate. And one of the things that made it easier for me is—I think my dad was a very well-respected member of the union. So, when I show up there, and they go, "Well, who are you?" and I'm, "Well, I'm Michele Drayton and I am Art Mink's daughter," well, really, nobody ever gave me a lot of shit. And I can remember one time—this was years later—one time I got a job at a gate—we're all upstairs, they're telling us what our job is, I'm going down the stairs, and one of my fellow [B-list] members is in back of me and there's some longshoremen I didn't really know. We're all gonna be working together. And I hear this guy say to my fellow [B-list] member, "Oh God, now we gotta work with that chick today," and he said, "That's not a chick, that's Michele." So, I have to say, among our [B-list] members, we always had pretty good relations.

[00:30:47] **HARVEY:** That's interesting. When you say the gate, what did you do at the gate?

[00:30:50] **MICHELE:** The gate is where the trucks bring in the containers. Before the computers started—this was before the computers—there was this big long form that had to be filled out for every container: the trucker, the truck number, the container number, the shipping, the bill of lading number, where's it going, and then it has to be weighed. So, there's somebody who's the scale master, and when I first started, you were not the scale master, you were running around outside with this clipboard, writing all this stuff down. And if it was pouring rain, trying to keep it not get sopping wet. Actually, I spent a lot of years working at gates.

[00:31:41] **HARVEY:** What other kinds of jobs did you do?

[00:31:47] **MICHELE:** I actually worked mostly at gates. I didn't really—well, for one thing, I prefer to work in a situation where I know most of the people, and when you work the ships, you're working with different people all the time and you don't necessarily know the job. I can remember being dispatched—and of course, when you first start you don't have a choice of where you go, you go wherever they tell you—I can remember going to some jobs and I couldn't even figure out where the office was or where I was supposed to go. "Where's the super-cargo?" and finally you find someone who shows you the way somewhere and the super-cargo is sitting in there. And the other thing is, if you get a gate job, usually you get a call-back and you don't have to go to the union hall at 7am. And I'm one of those people, I hate getting up in the morning, so if I can get a call-back, I'm taking that job. Ian, on the other hand, hated working at gates. He liked going to ships. Although there were a lot of times we worked together, there were a lot of times we didn't, too.

[00:32:56] **HARVEY:** When did you meet him?

[00:32:57] **MICHELE:** I met him, I think, when I first got on the B-list. We met at the union hall. For a long time, we didn't really let people know we were seeing each other because, you know, there's always a lot of gossip and stuff, everywhere. I can remember at one point, they thought there might be some extra work, so leave your phone number with the dispatcher. So Ian left my phone number with the dispatcher, and of course

he made a comment. [laughing] But I'm sure over the years there's been a lot of romances on the waterfront, and some turned out well like ours, and some turned out not so well.

[00:33:55] **HARVEY:** What about union politics? Did you get involved in union politics?

[00:33:58] **MICHELE:** Not right away. For one thing, when we first were in the union we had a business agent who not only didn't particularly like women, he liked to keep all the information to himself—he really didn't want anybody involved. But I remember when you have an election and then they have people who volunteer to come and count the ballots. So, me and another one of my girlfriends volunteered, and he did not call us in to count the ballots. He just said, "Well, we counted and we didn't need you." Well, this pissed me off. So, I just said, "Well, I'm gonna run for the E-board next time." And there's still a lot of people in the Local who I think respected my dad, and I think they thought I was a good union person, so I got elected.

[00:34:54] **HARVEY:** What year?

[00:34:56] **MICHELE:** You know, I really don't remember what year. It might've been seven or eight years later. Because I was on the B-list for seven years. So, now that I think about it, I couldn't have run until at least 1988 because you have to be an A person. Then at some point, one of the guys who we were friends with who'd been on the [Labor Relations Committee] for a long time told me he wasn't gonna run and he said, "Why don't you run?" So I ran. And there were still people who were more supportive and not supportive. But then eventually I got on what they called the high-tech committee, and I remember the first time I went to San Francisco with the high-tech committee one of the guys on the [Labor Relations Committee] who'd always been really supportive of me—I didn't know any of these people—went down there and told all of these people that I was really smart and he knew I was gonna do a great job for the union, and I always appreciated that.

[00:36:04] **HARVEY:** Who was that?

[00:36:06] **MICHELE:** Frank Cappiello. And as a matter of fact, when I went to his memorial I stood up and said that. So, I was on the [Labor Relations Committee] for a long time and I was on the high-tech committee for quite awhile.

[00:36:24] **HARVEY:** What do you remember from that? Do you remember a story or a good incident?

[00:36:29] **MICHELE:** One thing I can tell you is the first time I went to San Francisco that was the first time I'd ever stayed in a hotel by myself. Because I always had kids or Ian. And actually, my daughter was living in San Francisco at the time, and she worked for the hotel and restaurant employees union there. So I remember us meeting up for dinner and her going, "Don't worry mom, you're gonna be okay." [laughing]

[00:37:05] **HARVEY:** What year did you marry Ian? This is Ian Kennedy for the record.

[00:37:09] **MICHELE:** We got together in 19—I'll say, '81. Maybe 1980 because actually it was before we were registered. We didn't get married until 1998 because, you know, after you're already grown up, you've got your own last names, you've got your own credit. But there were also a couple of situations where couples on the waterfront, where the woman didn't work on the waterfront, had been together for a long time but they'd never gotten married, and when the guy died prematurely, the woman didn't get his pension. So, Ian and I kicked this around a little bit and I said, you know, "No matter what, we are not letting the [Pacific Maritime Association] keep that money. The year that we were getting married just happened to be the year that our oldest daughter was pregnant with twins. She was about seven months pregnant. So we went to the little office, me and my daughter, Cathy to get the wedding permit. And the lady turns to Cathy and goes, "Dear, what is

your name?” and Cathy goes “Oh no, it’s not me; I’m married. It’s my mom!” [laughing] So, now we’ve been married for twenty years. And our grandchildren are twenty years old.

[00:38:45] **HARVEY:** What are they doing?

[00:38:46] **MICHELE:** Well, one of them goes to college, this place in Denver called Johnson and Wales that we’d never heard of that evidently was a culinary college. But it’s expanded, and she’s in psychology. And they’re twins—it’s a girl and a boy. The boy is going to school, some kind of an art school in Portland, and having a bit more trouble finding his way. My daughter, now—my oldest daughter—she works for the teacher’s union, and her husband, David Alexander, is retired from the George Meany School for Labor—you might know him, Conor. But he still does a lot of union workshops and stuff.

[00:39:34] **HARVEY:** What year is it you said you retired? You mentioned it.

[00:39:39] **MICHELE:** 2007. So I’ve been retired eleven years.

[00:39:42] **HARVEY:** Do you remember the 2002 lockout?

[00:39:46] **MICHELE:** Yeah, I remember we were in Africa. We only found out after we got to Zimbabwe, somewhere where there was a television—that there was a lockout. And by the time we got home, it was over. But there was a ton of work because all of these ships had stacked up, and I mean, you could’ve worked twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week if you’d wanted to. So everybody who had lost time because of the lockout actually made up as much money as they wanted to because everything was so totally screwed up. So, yeah, I remember it, but I wasn’t actually there.

[00:40:35] **HARVEY:** I’m kinda looking over this list. [to Conor Casey] Do you have any questions?

[00:40:38] **CONOR CASEY:** Yeah, I actually do. One of the things I’ve noticed about the structure of Longshore work and the way in which you can choose your job and your own schedule, it seems to have fostered in some ways people’s ability to support social justice causes or do creative endeavors and art and stuff. Did that apply to your life, and do you know of other folks that that helped out?

[00:41:05] **MICHELE:** Well, it’s kind of interesting because there’s a lot of people in Longshore, who, even though you have a lot of flexibility, they just work all the time. It seems to kind of separate into two groups: the people who just work all the time, and the people who—some people just work enough to maintain their hours. But it does give you a lot of flexibility. I don’t know if I’ve used it all that much for any kind of social justice or anything, but you certainly can. You know, a lot of people use it, they’ve got their kids in sports, and they can go to their kids’ games or coach the team or something like that. We used it a lot for travel.

[00:42:03] **HARVEY:** Where’d you travel?

[00:42:05] **MICHELE:** Well, let’s see. We went back to Guam twice. We went to Bali. We went to a bunch of Pacific islands. We’ve been to Africa three times. We’ve been to Spain and Portugal and England and Scotland. We’ve been from Brazil all the way around South America. Of course, some of this is after we retired. Last year, we flew to Sydney and went all the way around Australia. In Sydney, we met with [Jimmy Donovan] from the MUA Pensioners, who picked us up at the hotel and toured us around for a couple of days. In Fremantle, we went with Chris Cain, who’s the president of the Western Australia Actives—he picked us up and toured us around. In Bristol—no, Brisbane, we met with Barney Sanders, who’s retired. He picked us up at the ship and toured us around. So, really, it’s like—and when we were just up in Juneau in August, John Bush, who’s here from Alaska, took us all around on his boat for the day. So, it’s really just like having this international family, which is really great. And, you know, any time that anybody has any, you know—there’s a death, or there’s a

sickness, or, I mean, as you can see what's going on in the convention, it's like there's this whole family of people to support them.

[00:43:49] **HARVEY:** [to Conor] Another question?

[00:43:53] **CONOR:** Yeah, I often ask this question because I'm interested in the way in which the [International Longshore and Warehouse Union] and its locals have been involved with international solidarity work. Do you remember the anti-apartheid stuff and also the refusal to load cargo, maybe for the—

[00:44:10] **MICHELE:** Yes, I do. Yes, I do. Yes, I remember we didn't unload any cargo from South Africa, although I don't know if anything would have come to Seattle anyway, but, you know, up and down the coast. I remember that Nelson Mandela—after he was elected president—he came to San Francisco and there was a huge rally where he thanked the [International Longshore and Warehouse Union]. I remember that we didn't unload cargo from El Salvador, we didn't unload coffee. And I also have heard that before World War Two we refused to ship scrap metal to Japan because it was gonna be made into weapons and shipped back in a bad way. So, yeah, that's one of the things I'm most proud about the [International Longshore and Warehouse Union]: the social justice work that they've done. And sometimes I think they haven't done as much as they should lately. I know the whole Israel-Palestine thing has been extremely controversial, and people seem to just divide into two sides. Which has been kind of disturbing.

[00:45:48] **HARVEY:** Have you done anything yourself around the Israeli situation?

[00:45:53] **MICHELE:** I have not done anything myself. We have had some members in our club who have tried to do things and it hasn't turned out very well—created some bad feelings.

[00:46:09] **CONOR:** Maybe you already touched on this, but I'm curious—I know that you're on the E-Board for the [Pacific Coast Pensioners Association], aren't you? Could you say the offices that you served and the different—

[00:46:19] **MICHELE:** Okay, in our Seattle club I've been the recording secretary for seven years. In the [Pacific Coast Pensioners Association] I've just been on the E-Board, from Seattle. And that's about as much as I want to do at this point. And as a matter of fact, I told Ian last year, "I don't know if I'm doing this again." But then after I came to the meeting, and I thought to myself, "This is still kind of an old boy's club; okay, I guess I'll do another year." [laughing] And, you know, Ian has actually been the one who is much more devoted to the university than I am. Not that I'm not devoted, but he is the one who really is working on that stuff on his computer. I'm like, "What are you doing?" "Oh, I'm working on the Frank Jenkins endowment, I don't like the wording." He's really good at that picky stuff. And I mean, let's face it, we are getting to the age where maybe we don't feel like we have to be quite as busy and quite as involved, and there's some younger people—I mean, Greg Mitre is really pretty young, and I think he retired because he had some sort of back trouble, so he retired earlier than a lot of people retire, which is why he has so much energy.

[00:47:52] **HARVEY:** You're about seventy-three years old?

[00:47:55] **MICHELE:** Yes.

[00:47:56] **HARVEY:** That's young.

[00:47:57] **MICHELE:** Well, I know it's all relative.

[00:48:02] **HARVEY:** What do you think we've left out?

[00:48:03] **MICHELE:** What do I think—well, one of the things I would like to say is that my mother was always just as devoted to social justice as my dad was. And she doesn't always get the recognition in these kinds of things because it was my dad who was the union member. But she was always just as much out on those picket lines as he was. And I especially remember doing the grape boycott. Boy, my mom and dad were out there all the time. And I can remember one Christmas when one of the kids had come home from college, and the grape stuff had just kind of been settled, and we were shopping, and I said to the lady, "Wait a minute, what was \$5.98 a pound?" and she said, "Those were the grapes," and I said, "Put those back!" [laughing] So for a long time when my kids were young, they never tasted grapes. I don't know if there is anything else. I have to say that I've tried to promote unionism within my own kids, and of course my dad did, too. And as a matter of fact, I can remember when I was a kid there were certain things that were on the boycott list. And you better not be buying that stuff. Both of my kids know you don't cross the picket line. Like I said, my oldest daughter works for the teacher's union. My youngest daughter isn't lucky enough to have a union job, she's an insurance underwriter, but she knows all about unions, and she's not crossing a picket line, and neither is my little granddaughter, who is nine. And, as a matter of fact, remember when we had the [Pacific Coast Pensioners Association] convention in Tacoma at the Murano Hotel? And remember there was this enactment of the people walking across the bridge? And then Dean McGrath and Mike Jagielski, they were recreating some speeches. And I was watching Dean McGrath, and I was watching his sons watching him. And I'm saying, that is the kind of family union stuff that I love. And actually, I remember hanging around the Local 37 union hall when I was a kid before the Marcos people took over Local 37. My mom and dad were really good friends with this guy named Chris Mensalvas, who was one of the leaders and they would always be at meetings there, and me and my sister were, I don't know how old we were, five or three or four, five, six, seven, eight—we'd be down there in the seats—and of course, you didn't have tablets then—we'd be coloring or reading a book or something. So we both—we grew up in it.

[00:51:18] **HARVEY:** I have a question. What about "Big Bob" [Robert McEllrath], who's just retired as international creditor—do you have any take on Big Bob, do you know Big Bob, did you work with him at all?

[00:51:27] **MICHELE:** I don't really know him. I've never worked with him. I think he's done a really good job for the union as far as contract negotiation and stuff. I don't think he's very involved in social justice issues. I know people say he's a little bit of an asshole—excuse my language.

[00:51:53] **HARVEY:** How come? Why do they say that?

[00:51:55] **MICHELE:** Well, he can just be very, very argumentative. But, as I said to Ian, if you're too nice, you just can't get anywhere. I mean, you have to just be able to hold the line. And I think he was really good at that.

[00:52:20] **HARVEY:** Kind of looking back—we've sort of made a point, but sometimes wrapping up we say, looking back, do you have anything to add?

[00:52:33] **MICHELE:** I would just say, the union has been a really important part of my life. When people say, you know, everything they have they owe to the [International Longshore and Warehouse Union]—I've got a great family, we've got great healthcare, we don't have to worry about paying the bills. We've got a beautiful house, which you guys can always come and visit. But more than that, we've got this feeling of community and family—that these people are gonna take care of you, and we're gonna take care of each other. So that's the most important thing.

[00:53:19] **HARVEY:** That's great. Thank you very much, much appreciated.